DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 407 512 CE 073 911

TITLE	Small Business in School-to-Work Partnerships. Resource Bulletin.
INSTITUTION	National School-to-Work Opportunities Office, Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	Jan 96
NOTE	6p.
AVAILABLE FROM	National School-to-Work Office, 400 Virginia Avenue, S.W., Room 210, Washington, DC 20024; 800-251-7236; fax: 202-401-6211; World Wide Web: http://www.stw.ed.gov.
PUB TYPE	Information Analyses (070)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Cooperative Programs; *Education Work Relationship; High Schools; *Institutional Cooperation; Parent School Relationship; Program Implementation; *School Business Relationship; *Small Businesses

ABSTRACT

Small businesses represent a resource of tremendous potential for school-to-work partnerships. Work in small businesses exposes students to many facets of running a businesses, and small businesses are creating most of the new jobs in the United States. On the other hand, small businesses have had limited involvement in school-to-work programs because they have few job openings, have limited or no human resource staff to work with school-to-work partners, and often are not aware of school-to-work opportunities because of the daily demands of running a business. Several strategies have been recommended by practitioners to increase small business involvement in school-to-work systems: (1) personal networks; (2) financial incentives; (3) employment specialists; and (4) intermediary organizations, such as national and local business councils and civic clubs. Effective practices in small business involvement in school-to-work are exemplified by the East San Gabriel Valley Regional Occupational Program in Los Angeles and the Capital Area Training Foundation in Austin, Texas. (Contains 12 references.) (KC)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 407 512

SCHOOL TO WORK OPPORTUNITIES

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

★RESOURCE★ BULLETIN

JANUARY 1996

Small Business in School-to-Work Partnerships

Small businesses represent a resource of tremendous potential for school-to-work partnerships. The Small Business Administration reports that small business provided fifty-three percent of all jobs and created two of three new jobs in 1992. In many communities across the United States, small businesses are the only employers. In addition to their key role in the economy, small businesses provide unique learning environments for students. Public Policy Associates, in a 1995 survey of small businesses, highlighted several distinct benefits of small business work-based learning opportunities, including exposure to the full range of activities necessary to run a business, the development of entrepreneurial skills, and the immediate opportunity to contribute to the enterprise. Yet despite these benefits, small businesses represent a largely untapped resource for school-to-work partnerships.

Several factors help to explain the limited involvement of small business. Recruiting small businesses for school-to-work is likely to yield fewer work-based learning placements per company than an equivalent marketing campaign with major employers. Small businesses also have relatively fewer employees, each one of whom typically performs multiple roles that a larger company could assign to several people. Major employers more often have a specialized human resources staff with the time to attend partnership meetings and to develop and administer placements. The urgency of running a business also tends to make small firms more isolated from the school system, less connected with other companies, and less aware of school-to-work initiatives.

Practitioners have recommended several strategies to increase small business involvement in school-to-work systems.

Personal Networks. Teachers, administrators, and parents all have personal networks within the business community that school-to-work practitioners have called upon to involve small businesses. Cultivating these connections builds a sense of community and encourages a culture of participation, which gradually may assume momentum, attracting other small businesses into the system. To create this kind of network requires thinking of small business involvement as a long-term partnership, one that means building trust and relationships based on mutual respect and benefit. Although building upon personal connections is essential when recruiting small businesses, and in smaller communities may be an adequate strategy, practitioners report success with other approaches that build upon the foundation of personal networks.

CE073 911

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

National School-to-Work Office, ★ 400 Virginia Ave., SW, Rm. 210, Washington, DC 20024 ★ (800)251-7236, fax (202)401-6211

Financial Incentives. Financial incentives can reduce the direct financial burden on small businesses. A recent National Governors Association survey reports that thirteen states are considering or planning to authorize a state tax credit for wages paid to school-to-work participants, and nine states are considering or planning to authorize a tax credit for the cost of training school-to-work participants. However, the ability of incentives to encourage small business participation is uncertain. Issues such as the red tape associated with government support may limit the appeal that financial incentives have to small business.

Employment Specialists. A number of local school-to-work systems use employment specialists to recruit employers and have found them particularly effective in recruiting small businesses. Experience suggests that an employment specialist, acting as an intermediary between school and employer, can develop an understanding of the special needs and concerns of small businesses. By devoting time and resources specifically to recruiting employers, employment specialists build relationships with small businesses which otherwise might have been overlooked.

Intermediary Organizations. The term "intermediary organization" encompasses a wide range of national, state, and local entities with links to employers, which could be called upon to facilitate the development of school-to-work systems. Basil Whiting, senior fellow at Public/Private Ventures, recently investigated the role of intermediary organizations in school-to-work systems, an approach particularly relevant to small business. Whiting demonstrates that business involvement in school-to-work initiatives is not yet systemic, and that the existing infrastructure of employer organizations has not supported or promoted employer involvement in school-to-work. For many major employers, this is not an impediment, as evidenced by the school-to-work initiatives developed by corporations such as Siemens, ITT, and McDonalds.

Small businesses, however, do not have internal structures or systems--such as training departments--to initiate and develop school-to-work programs. Intermediary organizations can supply this missing resource. Although many intermediary organizations currently focus on lobbying or economic development, an infrastructure based on intermediary organizations could both support school-to-work partnerships and build the capacity of small businesses to join school-to-work partnerships.

National intermediary organizations, such as the National Alliance of Business and the U. S. Chamber of Commerce, can coordinate employer efforts, synthesize and disseminate information, and provide technical assistance. National organizations representing specific industries can also contribute the information, specific to that industry, needed to develop career clusters, skill standards, and curricula. The National Alliance of Business is currently working with Jobs for the Future and several other intermediary organizations to develop a series of products and services to increase employer involvement in school-to-work initiatives: a series of promotional brochures addressing specific industries, a how-to guide to streamlining the start-up process for business, a half-day training program offering information and strategies to help business develop effective school-to-work transition efforts, and a series of comprehensive tool-kits for businesses within specific industries interested in enhancing their current school-to-work activities.

State intermediary organizations, such as the Oregon Business Council, provide technical assistance and training to help small businesses engage in school-to-work systems. The Oregon Business Council, in

National School-to-Work Office, ★ 400 Virginia Ave., SW, Rm. 210, Washington, DC 20024 ★ (800)251-7236, fax (202)401-6211

conjunction with the state school-to-work office, is assembling a set of guidelines and materials to help local partnerships engage employers. The council will establish a specific set of guidelines for each of the major school-to-work models, such as youth apprenticeship, mentoring, and career awareness.

Local intermediary organizations can play an important role in developing partnerships with small businesses. They can relieve many administrative pressures that often limit small business involvement: coordinating the details of student assignments, providing payroll and benefit services, and providing information on liability issues. In some instances, they are the "employer of record" for participating students. Local intermediary organizations can also enhance the efficiency of an employer recruitment strategy, providing a single channel of communication and access to large numbers of small businesses. An efficient and coordinated strategy assures that employers do not receive multiple calls from people working within the same school-to-work system, creating a burden for potential business partners.

Local intermediary organizations may focus specifically on school-to-work, or they may be local counterparts of national organizations like local chambers of commerce. Other local organizations, such as Rotary Clubs and Kiwanis, have proven to be an effective means of developing school-to-work partnerships. Organizations with good track records of working with employers are most likely to be effective, because they have established credibility as well as mutual respect and avenues of communication.

Effective Practices

The East San Gabriel Valley Regional Occupational Program (ESGVROP) in Los Angeles, California, has cultivated a large network of small businesses that provide a great variety of work-based learning opportunities for students. More than 300 businesses are involved in the partnership, ranging from large corporations to small businesses such as veterinary hospitals, real estate offices, and retail stores. In a recent statewide survey of school-to-work transition programs conducted by the California Educational Research Cooperative, ROPs were found to have a significantly higher involvement of business people and more opportunities for student worksite learning than high schools, adult schools, or community colleges. Key elements of their approach to building education and business partnerships include using personal contacts and local chambers of commerce. For further information, contact Dr. Laurel Adler, Superintendent, East San Gabriel Regional Occupational Program, 1501 W. Del Norte, West Covina, CA 91790. ★ (818) 962-5080.

The Capital Area Training Foundation is a staffed, funded intermediary organization that supports the school-to-work transition system in Austin, Texas, effectively recruiting small and medium-sized businesses. The foundation, supported by the local chamber of commerce, facilitates business involvement in the system in a number of ways: organizing and supporting a system of industry steering committees that include small businesses; generating support for the school-to-work system through public awareness campaigns and community-building activities; providing and coordinating training and development for teachers, industry trainers, counselors, and mentors; developing new programs to meet identified needs through industry, school, and community partnerships; evaluating efforts and coordinating information on success rates, alternative methods, and best practices; and creating long-term stability for the system by securing a permanent funding base. For further information, contact Chuck Bradley, Capital Area Training Foundation, P.O. Box 2026, Austin, Texas 78768-2026 ★ (512) 474-2710.

National School-to-Work Office, ★ 400 Virginia Ave., SW, Rm. 210, Washington, DC 20024 ★ (800)251-7236, fax (202)401-6211

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THIS TOPIC, CONSULT THE FOLLOWING PUBLICATIONS AND ORGANIZATIONS:

Publications

Bailey, Thomas R. ed. *Learning to Work: Employer Involvement in School-to-Work Transition Programs.* Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 1995.

Flynn, Erin, and Robert Forrant. *Facilitating Firm-level Change: The Role of Intermediary Organizations in the Manufacturing Modernization Process.* Boston, MA: Jobs for the Future, 1995.

Maloney, Larry, and Jill Scheldrup. *New Century Workers: Effective School-to-Work Transition Programs.* Washington, DC: Center for Workforce Preparation, 1994.

McNeil, Patricia W., and Christine D. Kulick. *Employers' Role in School-to-Work Opportunities.* Washington, DC: Academy for Educational Development, 1995.

National Governors Association. *State Progress in School-to-Work System Development.* Washington, DC: Author, 1995.

Whiting, Basil J., and Wade D. Sayer. *School-to-Work or School-to-What?: Exploring Prospects for Building Employer Capacity in School-to-Work Programming.* An interim report prepared for The Pew Charitable Trusts. Philadelphia, PA: Public/Private Ventures, 1995.

Organizations

Center for Workforce Preparation, an affiliate of the U. S. Chamber of Commerce, assists chambers of commerce and small businesses in local education and training reform and programs. ★ 1615 H Street NW, Washington, DC 20062-2000. ★ (202) 463-5525.

National Alliance of Business builds partnerships with government, labor, and education to assure quality in the American workforce. ★ 1201 New York Avenue, NW, Suite 700, Washington, DC 20005-3917. ★ (202) 289-2888.

Oregon Business Council, a major force behind the state's school reform movement, seeks to mount a technical assistance and training function to help medium-sized and small businesses engage in both school reform and school-to-work programs. ★ 1100 SW 6th Avenue, Suite 1608, Portland, OR 97204-1090. ★ (503) 220-0691.

Public/Private Ventures is a national nonprofit corporation that designs, manages, and evaluates social policy initiatives aimed at helping people whose lack of preparation for the work force hampers their chances for productive lives. P/PV has recently investigated the role of intermediary organizations in school-to-work. ★ One Commerce Square, Suite 900, 2005 Market Street, Philadelphia, PA 19103. ★ (215) 557-4434.

Public Policy Associates conducts research, development, and evaluation in the areas of education, workforce development, health, and environmental policy. Small business involvement in school-to-work has been

a focus of their recent work. Their clients include public agencies, trade associations, and other nonprofit as well as private firms. ★ 213 E. St. Joseph Street, Lansing, MI 48913. ★ (517) 485-4477.

For more information about STW Resource Bulletins, please contact:

The National School-to-Work Learning and Information Center

400 Virginia Avenue, SW, Room 210 / Washington, D.C. 20024

1-800-251-7236 / Fax: 202-401-6211

E-mail: stw-lc@ed.gov

Internet: http://www.stw.ed.gov